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American Samoa

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

Contents

		Page
	The Territory at a glance	3
I.	Constitutional, legal and political issues	4
II.	Budget	7
III.	Economic conditions	7
	A. General	7
	B. Fisheries and agriculture	9
	C. Tourism	9
	D. Transport and communications	9
	E. Water, sanitation system and utilities	10
IV.	Social conditions	10
	A. General	10
	B. Labour and immigration	11
	C. Education	11

Note: The information contained in the present working paper has been derived from public sources, including those of the territorial Government, and from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the administering Power under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations. Information was transmitted by the administering Power on 14 January 2015. Further details are contained in previous working papers, available from www.un.org/en/decolonization/workingpapers.shtml.

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D. Public health 12
E. Crime and public safety 12
V. Environmental protection and disaster preparedness 12
VI. Relations with international organizations and partners 13
VII. Future status of the Territory 13
A. Position of the territorial Government 13
B. Position of the administering Power 13
VIII. Action taken by the General Assembly 14

The Territory at a glance

Territory: American Samoa is a Non-Self-Governing Territory under the Charter of the United Nations. It is an unincorporated and unorganized territory of the United States of America, administered by the Office of Insular Affairs of the United States Department of the Interior.

Representative of administering Power: United States Department of the Interior, which has a representative resident on the ground.[a]

Geography: Located in the South Pacific, approximately 3,700 km south-west of Hawaii and 4,350 km north-east of Australia. The Territory consists of seven islands: Tutuila and Aunuu, in addition to Ofu, Olosega and Ta'u (known as the Manu'a Islands) and the two coral atolls of Swains and Rose.

Land area: 200 km².

Exclusive economic zone: 404,391 km².

Population: 55,170 (2013 estimate).

Life expectancy at birth: 75.9 years (female); 69.3 years (male).

Ethnic composition: Native Pacific Islander (92.6 per cent); Asian (3.6 per cent); white (0.9 per cent); other ethnic origin (2.9 per cent).

Languages: English, Samoan.

Seat of Government: Fagatogo.

Head of territorial Government: Governor Lolo Letalu Matalasi Moliga.

Main political parties: Democrat, Republican.

Elections: The most recent elections were held in November 2014 to elect the delegate to the United States House of Representatives and 20 members of the American Samoa House of Representatives. The next elections are due to be held in November 2016 for the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, the delegate to the United States House of Representatives and 20 members of the American Samoa House of Representatives.

Legislature: Fono (bicameral legislative assembly).

Gross domestic product per capita: $8,942 (2005 chained dollars; 2013 estimate).

Economy: Fishing and agriculture.

Unemployment rate: 9.2 per cent (2012 estimate).

Monetary unit: United States dollar.

Brief history: It is believed that the Samoan archipelago was settled some 3,000 years ago by people migrating from South-East Asia. The Dutch were the first Europeans to reach the islands, in 1722. The 1899 Treaty of Berlin, also known as the Anglo-German Samoa Convention, apportioned to the United States the eastern islands of the Samoan archipelago.

[a] Secretary's Order 2657 of 29 August 1951 and Secretary's Order 3009, as amended, of 3 November 1977, set forth the extent and nature of the authority of the Government of American Samoa and the manner in which the authority is to be exercised (see the Electronic Library of Interior Policies, United States Department of the Interior).

I. Constitutional, legal and political issues

1. By the late 1800s, internal strife among the chiefs of the islands of the Samoan archipelago and struggles among the colonial Powers of Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America led to a period of instability. Deeds ceding the islands to the United States from the early 1900s were accepted by an Act of the United States Congress on 20 February 1929. Pursuant to that Act, American Samoans were given the status of United States nationals. The Act provided for an American Samoan Government with all civil, judicial and military powers to be vested in a designee of the President of the United States. Given that the United States interest in the area had been mainly military, the Territory was placed under the jurisdiction of the United States Navy. On 29 June 1951, Executive Order 10264 of the President of the United States transferred administrative responsibility for the Territory to the Department of the Interior.

2. American Samoa is an unincorporated and unorganized territory under United States law. Not all provisions of the Constitution of the United States or of United States law apply. Residents of American Samoa are not United States citizens but United States nationals who can freely enter the United States and work or reside anywhere they choose. Children born in the Territory to foreign parents become citizens of either the mother's or the father's country of origin, not United States nationals. American Samoans may not vote in general elections in the United States but are permitted to participate in presidential primaries and caucuses.

3. The Constitution of the Territory provides for separate executive and legislative branches and an independent judiciary. The executive branch comprises a governor and a lieutenant governor elected for four-year terms by universal adult suffrage. All American Samoans over 18 years of age are eligible to vote. The Governor is responsible for executing both American Samoan and United States laws and has veto power with regard to legislation passed by the Fono, the legislature of the Territory.

4. The Fono is a bicameral legislature, comprising the Senate, whose 18 members are chosen by 14 tribal councils, and the House of Representatives, 20 of whose members are elected by popular vote, with the other appointed as a non-voting delegate from Swains Island. Only a *matai*, the traditional chief of an *aiga*, which is an extended family, can become a senator. Senators hold office for a four-year term and representatives for a two-year term. The Fono may pass laws with regard to all local affairs, provided that they are not inconsistent with United States laws in force in the Territory or with United States treaties or international agreements.

5. The judicial system consists of a high court, for which the Chief Justice and the Associate Justices are appointed by the United States Secretary of the Interior, and the local district and village courts, for which the judges are appointed by the Governor. The High Court is separated into appellate, trial, land and titles and family, drug and alcohol divisions. The United States Congress has granted limited federal jurisdiction to the High Court to hear certain cases involving federal statutory issues. Examples of federal judicial power delegated to the High Court include the authority to decide occupational safety and health administration issues and ship mortgage actions in American Samoa. Other matters of federal law arising in the Territory are adjudicated in the United States district courts, mainly the

federal courts in Hawaii and Washington, D.C. Given that American Samoa is not part of a United States federal judicial district or circuit, there are no statutory provisions for appealing against decisions of the High Court to a federal district court.

6. The 1960 Constitution of American Samoa was revised in 1967 and subsequently amended in 1970 and 1977. Any amendments or modifications to the Constitution of American Samoa, as approved by the United States Secretary of the Interior, may be made only by an Act of the United States Congress. In 2008, a referendum that would have revised an aspect of the Constitution was narrowly defeated. The June-July 2010 Constitutional Convention proposed amendments or revisions to the current Constitution, including those relating to the prohibition of further individualization of communal lands in the Territory, the establishment of an impartial jury in all criminal prosecutions, the enhancement of the Samoan language and culture in the educational system, the management and preservation of the natural resources of the Territory in accordance with local laws and the provision for an impeachment of the leaders of the Territory. At the general election held in November 2010, however, the voters overwhelmingly defeated the proposed changes.

7. At the general elections held in November 2012, voters chose a new Governor, independent candidate Lolo Letalu Matalasi Moliga. In November 2014, voters elected 20 members of the American Samoa House of Representatives and the delegate to the United States House of Representatives (see para. 8). A constitutional referendum was held during the general elections held in November 2014, proposing an amendment to the revised Constitution to allow the Fono to override vetoes by the Governor. Voters rejected the proposal.

8. Since 1981, American Samoa has elected by direct vote a delegate to the United States House of Representatives for a two-year term. The delegate may vote in committees. In the general election held in November 2014, Aumua Amata Radewagen defeated the incumbent, Eni F. H. Faleomavaega, to become the first female delegate of American Samoa to the United States House of Representatives.

9. On 26 June 2013, the United States District Court for the District of Columbia dismissed a lawsuit filed by five non-citizen United States nationals born in American Samoa and the Samoan Federation of America (*Tuaua v. United States*) seeking a declaratory judgement that would assert that the citizenship clause of the Fourteenth Amendment extends to American Samoa. As stated in paragraph 2 above, American Samoa is an unincorporated territory, meaning that people born there are not conferred birthright citizenship. In 2014, an appeal was filed before the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit and oral arguments were presented on 9 February 2015. A decision is expected during the first quarter of 2015.

10. Addressing the United States House of Representatives on 27 June 2013, the delegate from American Samoa expressed thanks to the Court for what he termed its well-reasoned opinion and for reaffirming the authority of Congress to grant citizenship to the people of American Samoa. In his view, the decision would allow the people of American Samoa to decide whether they wished to become citizens. In a letter addressed to the territorial Governor and the Fono in April 2013, he had stated that the lawsuit posed a threat to the traditional culture of American Samoa and that it was unknown whether the entire Constitution of the United States would

apply to American Samoa if the Court applied the citizenship clause to it. He had also said that, if people who were born in American Samoa automatically became United States citizens, the United States would likely take control of the immigration system in American Samoa. He had affirmed that it was important that the people of American Samoa, and not the Court, should decide whether they wished to become United States citizens by birthright.

11. According to media reports, the Governor of the Territory submitted his official position on the political status of American Samoa in a document dated 13 June 2013 entitled "Decolonization issue regarding American Samoa", which was forwarded in the same month to the Office of Insular Affairs of the United States Department of the Interior. He noted that American Samoa was not a colony of the United States, but rather a territory, a status that had been fashioned voluntarily because of economic overtones. The Governor of the Territory stated his appreciation for the continued diligence of the United Nations in working to ensure that the administering Powers revisited existing relationships with their territories or insular possessions so that every opportunity was provided for the latter to opt out if they so desired. In his view, the United Nations was genuinely committed to ensuring that the general welfare of such territories was secured through the development of their financial systems, the strengthening of their Governments and the building of self-sustaining economies.

12. The Governor pointed out that the current status of American Samoa provided more self-determining authority to American Samoa to make its own decisions. The prevailing perception that American Samoa was a colony by definition stemmed from the informal character of the relationship with the United States, with the absence of an organic act that formally defined the relationship. In a de facto sense, he said, American Samoa was part of the United States, substantially self-governing and not a colony in any real sense. He noted that American Samoa had freely, through its deeds of cession, bequeathed its sovereignty to the United States; it had not been acquired through any military conquest. Being part of the United States family was really a matter of self-determination.

13. The Governor also noted that, while the federal Government of the United States had lived up to its commitment to American Samoa with regard to the provision of funds, there were current issues decided at the congressional level that had negatively affected the ability of American Samoa to advance its social and economic development prospects. He pointed out, however, that American Samoa had representation in the United States Congress to register its objections to measures that adversely affected its ability to improve the quality of life in the Territory.

14. The Governor recalled the recommendation made in 2006 by the Future Political Status Study Commission that American Samoa continue as an unorganized and unincorporated territory and that a process of negotiation with the United States Congress for a permanent political status be initiated, in addition to the points forming the basis for such negotiations (see A/AC.109/2008/3). He further expressed his personal preference for the United States Congress, which had the ultimate authority to decide on the type of political status that the United States would have with American Samoa, to relinquish that authority to the people of American Samoa in order to empower them to make the decision that they deemed appropriate.

15. During the regional Pacific seminar on decolonization, held in Fiji from 21 to 23 May 2014, the representative of the Governor of American Samoa recognized that at no point in time had the United States acted contrary to the expressed wishes of the people of American Samoa. However, he also observed that, in his view, the current legal status of American Samoa had caused the Territory to be affected by the actions of the United States Congress in unforeseen ways, owing to its size, location, geography and economic circumstance. He further stated that now was the time to take the next step of serious discussion about the future political status of the Territory, a process that would commence in 2015.

II. Budget

16. The final version of the budget for the fiscal year 2015, which began on 1 October 2014, amounted to $424.48 million. According to the Office of Insular Affairs of the Department of the Interior, grant funds are provided each year to American Samoa for the operation of the local government, including the judiciary, to fill the gap between budget needs and local revenues. The Office's 2015 budget request for American Samoa operations is $22.8 million, with 61.5 per cent allocated to basic operations and 34.5 per cent to operations of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Tropical Medical Center. According to the Office, the operation grant was maintained at a constant level between 2014 and 2015 in order to promote self-sufficiency, requiring American Samoa to absorb the costs of inflation or costs associated with the growing population. The Office has designated American Samoa as a high-risk grantee in an effort to improve accountability for federal funds. Such designation allows the Office to require grantees to comply with special conditions for future or existing grants. The special conditions may include payment of grant funds on a reimbursable basis; withholding of approval to proceed from one project phase to another until receipt of acceptable evidence of current performance; additional project monitoring; and requiring grantees to obtain technical or management assistance. The high-risk designation will be removed once the Government of American Samoa:

(a) Has completed single audits by the statutory deadline for the two most recent consecutive years, resulting in opinions that are not disclaimed and do not contain qualifications that the Office determines in its reasonable discretion to be material;

(b) Has a balanced budget, as confirmed by independent auditors, for the two most recent consecutive years, without regard for non-recurring windfalls such as insurance settlements;

(c) Is in substantial compliance with the memorandum of agreement, signed in 2002 between the territorial Government and the Office, and the fiscal reform plan.

III. Economic conditions

A. General

17. As noted in previous working papers, the President of the United States signed the Insular Areas Act into law in 2012, postponing the minimum wage increases for

2012, 2013 and 2014. Annual wage increases of $0.50 will recommence on 30 September 2015 and will continue every three years until all rates have reached the federal minimum rate. The wage rates are set for particular industries, not for an employee's particular occupation. The rates are minimum rates; an employer may choose to pay an employee at a rate higher than the rate or rates for its industry.

18. In March 2014, the United States Government Accountability Office published a report on the impact of the minimum wage increases, namely, changes in employment and earnings and changes in key industries since the most recent federal minimum wage increase in 2009 and since the increases began in 2007. The findings set out in that report are reflected throughout the present working paper.

19. According to the report, American Samoa has separate minimum wages for 18 separate industries, currently ranging from $4.18 to $5.59 per hour. The tuna canning industry, the largest source of private sector employment in the Territory, has a current minimum wage of $4.76 per hour and mostly employs foreign labour from the neighbouring islands of Samoa. There is currently one operating cannery, and an additional fish company has begun limited operations. Each of the minimum wage rates in American Samoa will next be increased by $0.50 per hour on 30 September 2015, with further increases every 3 years. Under current law, the minimum wage in the tuna canning industry will reach the United States minimum of $7.25 per hour in 2027.

20. In comments to the report, the Government of American Samoa noted that whereas the report captured the consensus among American Samoan stakeholders to postpone the 2015 minimum wage increase, there were a number of concerns about the information sources used in the report. The Government stated that there was significant evidence that the 2010 United States census grossly undercounted the population of American Samoa. The territorial Government restated its opposition to further minimum wage increases under the present schedule and proposed that American Samoa set its own minimum wage schedule, citing the vulnerability of the Territory to elements of the international and national marketplace and United States international trade and national budget policies. The Government stated that tethering the American Samoa minimum wage to that of the United States was misguided, and it was argued that because of the differences between the economies of the United States and American Samoa, the minimum wage of the Territory could never equal the United States minimum wage. The Government proposed instead that American Samoa be allowed to develop its own minimum wage schedule with appropriate guidance and oversight provided by the United States Department of Labor and the United States Department of the Interior.

21. In September 2014, the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the United States Department of Commerce released gross domestic product (GDP) estimates for the Territory for 2013 and estimates of GDP by industry and compensation by industry for 2012. The estimates of GDP for American Samoa showed that real GDP decreased by 2.4 per cent in 2013. The decline in the economy of the Territory reflected a decrease in territorial government spending that was partly offset by increases in consumer spending and private fixed investment.

22. In November 2014, the Territorial Economic Development Implementation Task Force submitted a comprehensive platform for the Territory entitled "Economic Development Implementation Plan for American Samoa, Fiscal Years 2014-2017". The plan focused on the following areas: transportation services and

infrastructure, new business and industry, federal Government constraints and business climate, agriculture, tourism, fisheries and workforce development.

23. According to the Department of Commerce of the Government of American Samoa, during the period from 2007-2012, exports remained significantly higher than import totals. Canned tuna accounted for more than 95 per cent of total exports for all six years. American Samoa currently exports to the United States. Imports however, are shipped to the Territory from diverse trading partners that include the United States, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand.

B. Fisheries and agriculture

24. According to the report of the United States Government Accountability Office (see para. 18), cannery officials stated that wage increases were among the factors affecting the tuna canning industry in American Samoa, and that labour costs, including the minimum wage increases, placed the Territory at a significant cost disadvantage in comparison with other canned tuna exporting countries.

25. Almost 90 per cent of all farms in the Territory operate on a subsistence basis. Prospects for agricultural development continue to be limited because much of the land is volcanic and mountainous and only a small amount of level land is suitable for cultivation. Farmers in American Samoa benefit from assistance provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture and its environmental quality incentives programme.

C. Tourism

26. The American Samoa Statistical Yearbook 2012, published by the Department of Commerce of American Samoa, found that the United States continued to be the primary tourism market for the Territory, holding 56 per cent of the market share, followed by New Zealand with 29 per cent, Australia with 11 per cent and other countries with the remaining 4 per cent.

D. Transport and communications

27. There are approximately 180 km of public and primary paved roads and 235 km of secondary village roads in American Samoa. Pago Pago harbour, an all-weather deep-draught harbour, has a main dock which is 1,000 feet long, handling ships of up to a 32-foot draught. The harbour provides the full complement of equipment and facilities. The ship repair facility features a 3,000-ton marine railway.

28. The four airports in the Territory are situated on the islands of Tutuila, Ofu, Olosega and Ta'u. Pago Pago International Airport is owned and operated by the territorial Government. The main airport is regularly served by a number of airlines that link American Samoa with Hawaii and the continental United States, in addition to countries in the South Pacific. Within the Territory, regular flights to Ofu, Olosega and Ta'u are also available.

29. The Territory's air transport service to and from the United States is severely restricted by United States cabotage laws that prohibit foreign carriers from transporting passengers between American Samoa and other parts of the United States, according to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy document.

30. The Territory has three FM radio stations and three AM radio stations, serving some 57,000 radios. One government-owned television station broadcasts more than three channels to approximately 14,000 television sets. Internet access is provided by the American Samoa Telecommunications Authority, a semi-autonomous government agency.

E. Water, sanitation system and utilities

31. The American Samoa Power Authority provides water, wastewater, solid-waste and electricity services to customers on five of the seven islands. It provides drinking water to 90 per cent of the Territory from wells, with the remaining 10 per cent being serviced by outer-village systems.

32. American Samoa depends entirely on diesel-generated power. Through the American Samoa Territorial Office of Fiscal Reform, the American Samoa Power Authority applied to the Federal Emergency Management Agency of the United States for funds to construct and operate a 23.5 MWh power plant to replace the capacity lost when the Satala power plant was severely damaged by the earthquake, tsunami and flood of 29 September 2009. According to the environmental assessment prepared by the Agency in December 2013, the plant sustained severe damage in the disaster and was subsequently demolished, eliminating its ability to meet the energy demands of American Samoa. Since then, the Authority has been meeting demand through temporary generators, an inefficient and unfeasible long-term solution. The environmental assessment identified five options for the construction and operation of a replacement power plant that would return the Authority's power distribution network to its pre-disaster capacity. According to a press release from the office of the Territory's delegate to the United States House of Representatives, dated 1 April 2014, the Federal Emergency Management Agency of the United States awarded $25.2 million in additional federal funding to the American Samoa Power Authority to replace the Satala power plant. Given that waste management is recognized as a major public health and environmental concern for Pacific island countries and territories, American Samoa is part of the region's strategy for solid-waste management, which sets the strategic direction for the period 2010-2015.

IV. Social conditions

A. General

33. Known as *fa'asamoa*, the Samoan way of life is based on the notion of mutual respect and sharing among the *aiga* (extended families), each featuring a common allegiance to a *matai* (chief), and it influences every aspect of the socioeconomic fabric of the Territory. Since 2008, the legislature has been working to further strengthen the use of the Samoan language in public schools, in tandem with English.

34. In 2011, the Pacific office of the United Nations Children's Fund and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community published *The State of Pacific Youth 2011: Opportunities and Obstacles*, a report highlighting significant problems facing young people in the Pacific, including American Samoa, such as the high number of teenage pregnancies, the high proportion of female teenagers who are raped (26 per cent) and alcohol abuse.

35. According to the American Samoa Statistical Yearbook 2012, about 57.8 per cent of the population, or 54.4 per cent of families, were below the United States poverty level in 2009. Almost 18 per cent of families are headed by a single female.

B. Labour and immigration

36. According to the report of the United States Government Accountability Office (see para. 18), American Samoa employment and earnings have decreased since 2007, but employment increased slightly from 2011 to 2012. American Samoa tax data combined with questionnaire data of the Office showed that the total number of employees in American Samoa increased by 1.5 per cent from 2011 to 2012 (from 15,552 to 15,790). However, from 2007 to 2012, employment declined by 11 per cent.

37. American Samoa has its own immigration laws and conditions for entry to the Territory, which are not the same as those applicable to the United States. As previously reported, a new immigration law for American Samoa has entered into force, giving the Attorney General, rather than a government-appointed board, full authority over the granting of permanent resident status. In the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy document it was reported that local control of immigration was an important advantage to American Samoa, especially in view of its limited labour force skill range and the need to bring in skilled workers and management for many industries. It further recommended revising the immigration law, policy and procedures to better accommodate business labour requirements and expressed concern that local immigration and customs control in American Samoa could be federalized, a scenario that could have very severe adverse effects on the local labour market.

C. Education

38. Education in American Samoa is compulsory for those 6 to 18 years of age. The education system is broadly based on that of the United States. A total of 95.7 per cent of the student population is Samoan, whereas 4.3 per cent of students are from China, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and other Pacific islands.

39. American Samoa has a literacy rate of approximately 97 per cent. There are five school districts, each centred on a high school together with lower-level elementary or "feeder schools". The Department of Education of American Samoa is comprised of 22 early childhood education centres, 22 elementary schools, and six high schools. The education department serves more than 15,531 students from kindergarten to grade 12, early childhood education and special education programmes. The Department has 563 teachers in elementary education, 248 teaching personnel in secondary education, 18 in vocational education, 202 in special education and 118 in early childhood education.

40. During the regional Pacific seminar on decolonization (see para. 15 above) the representative of the Governor of American Samoa observed that social and educational advancement had been significant over the recent half century. He noted in particular that American Samoa had an improved standard of living and mandatory education from kindergarten through grade 12, including United States accredited high schools and a United States accredited college, the American Samoa Community College, which offers two-year degree courses in the arts and sciences and certificate programmes of proficiency in vocational and clerical skills, business and nursing. The College also offers a Bachelor of Elementary Education degree.

D. Public health

41. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Country Cooperation Strategy for American Samoa for 2013-2017, the most serious health issues are related to the increase in chronic and non-communicable diseases, owing to improper nutrition and physical inactivity. Significant increases have been seen in obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, cerebrovascular diseases, diabetes mellitus and its complications, arthritis and some forms of cancer.

42. Some 16 per cent of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Tropical Medical Center budget comes from the federal Government, and most of the funds are used to purchase medical supplies. Vaccines and pharmaceuticals are purchased in the United States, given that the Food and Drug Administration prohibits the purchase of medicines elsewhere. Logistical and financial factors cause frequent scarcity problems.

43. According to WHO, the morbidity pattern has fundamentally changed over the past three decades, with an increase in non-communicable diseases stemming from modernization and lifestyle changes. Inappropriate nutrition and physical inactivity are the leading cause of significant increases in obesity in both sexes, especially young people.

E. Crime and public safety

44. The Territory continued to enhance cooperation with the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police organization and the United States Department of Justice through its Office of Territorial and International Criminal Intelligence and Drug Enforcement.

45. In 2012, it was announced that all Federal Bureau of Investigation operations and investigative efforts in American Samoa would be handled by the Bureau's office in Honolulu, Hawaii. The decision for the consolidation was made by the United States Congress for budgetary reasons.

V. Environmental protection and disaster preparedness

46. The American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency, funded by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, is mandated to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment in particular air, water and land.

47. Like all South Pacific countries, American Samoa faces the problem of safe disposal of solid and liquid waste, in particular as a result of urbanization.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme, point source pollution from industrial waste and sewage, inappropriately sited and poorly managed garbage dumps and disposal of toxic chemicals is a significant contributor to marine pollution and coastal degradation. There is growing concern that toxic and hazardous waste may be brought to the region from developed countries for disposal.

48. The Federal Emergency Management Agency of the United States announced on 10 September 2014 that federal disaster aid had been made available to American Samoa to supplement territory and local recovery efforts in the area affected by the severe storms, flooding and landslides that occurred during the period from 29 July to 3 August 2014.

VI. Relations with international organizations and partners

49. American Samoa has been an associate member of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific since 1988. International labour conventions and recommendations are applicable to it. The Territory belongs to various regional bodies of the United Nations system, including WHO, for which it falls under the auspices of the Regional Office for the Western Pacific and the Western Pacific Regional Centre for the Promotion of Environmental Planning and Applied Studies.

50. American Samoa is a member of several regional organizations, including the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the Pacific Basin Development Council, the Pacific Tuna Development Foundation, the Pacific Islands Association of Non-governmental Organizations, the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education, the Pacific Asia Travel Association and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme. The Territory participates in the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission and the Pacific Community Coastal Fisheries Programme. American Samoa also belongs to United States organizations, such as the National Governors Association and the Western Governors' Association. The Government of American Samoa has signed memorandums of understanding with the Governments of Samoa and Tonga on mutual economic cooperation and has sent trade missions to a number of countries in the Pacific region. American Samoa hosted the seventh Pacific water conference and expo of the Pacific Water and Wastes Association from 9 to 11 September 2014.

51. The Territory also holds observer status with the Pacific Islands Forum and the Alliance of Small Island States.

VII. Future status of the Territory

A. Position of the territorial Government

52. Section I of the present working paper reflects recent developments in American Samoa concerning its future political status.

B. Position of the administering Power

53. In a letter dated 2 November 2006 addressed to the delegate of American Samoa to the United States House of Representatives, the United States Assistant

Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs Jeffrey T. Bergner set forth the position of the Government of the United States on the status of American Samoa and other United States insular areas. In his letter, the Assistant Secretary of State indicated that the status of the insular areas regarding their political relations with the federal Government was an internal United States issue, and not one that came under the purview of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. He also stated that the Special Committee had no authority to alter in any way the relationship between the United States and those territories and no mandate to engage the United States in negotiations on their status. He further stated that, at the same time, in accordance with its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to provide regularly to the United Nations statistical and other information of a technical nature relating to the economic, social and educational conditions in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the federal Government submitted annual updates on United States territories to the Special Committee as a demonstration of United States cooperation as an administering Power and to correct any errors in information that the Special Committee might have received from other sources.

VIII. Action taken by the General Assembly

54. On 5 December 2014, the General Assembly adopted resolutions 69/105 A and B without a vote, on the basis of the report of the Special Committee (A/69/23) and the subsequent recommendation by the Fourth Committee. Section I of resolution 69/105 B concerns American Samoa. In that section, the General Assembly:

(a) Welcomed the work of the territorial Government with respect to moving forward on political status, local autonomy and self-governance issues with a view to making political and economic progress and in particular the announcement of a dialogue, to commence in 2015, among the people of American Samoa on the Territory's future political status;

(b) Expressed once again its appreciation for the invitation extended in 2011 by the Governor of American Samoa to the Special Committee to send a visiting mission to the Territory, called upon the administering Power to facilitate such a mission if the territorial Government so desired, and requested the Chair of the Special Committee to take all the steps necessary to that end;

(c) Requested the administering Power to assist the Territory by facilitating its work concerning a public awareness programme, consistent with Article 73 *b* of the Charter of the United Nations, and in that regard called upon the relevant United Nations organizations to provide assistance to the Territory, if requested;

(d) Called upon the administering Power to assist the territorial Government in the diversification and sustainability of the economy of the Territory and to address employment and cost-of-living issues.